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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002399

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [IR](#) [SY](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: IRAQI FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS DISCUSS REQUEST
FOR UN INVESTIGATION

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Gary A. Grappo, for Reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Senior MFA officials told Pol M/C September 4 that the GOI is determined to pursue a investigation of the role of neighboring countries, in particular Syria, in the bombings of August 19, as well as, the broader issue of intervention and external support for terrorism in Iraq. They said the Iraqi PermRep had been instructed to solicit the support of UNSC members and strongly requested U.S. support. The GOI hoped the UN investigation would spur Damascus to expel key Iraqi Ba'athists and end its practice of allowing foreign fighters to cross the border into Iraq. The GOI was also willing to have the "fact-finding" commission examine the impact that other neighboring countries, including Iran, were having in support of terrorism in Iraq. Echoing the Ambassador, Pol M/C assured the Iraqis that the United States shares Iraq's concerns about malign foreign influence on Iraqi security and was examining ways to support the GOI on this issue. END SUMMARY.

Involving the UN

12. (C) On September 4, three senior officials from the Iraqi MFA -- Ambassador Srood Najib (chief of staff to FM Zebari), Ambassador Mohammed al-Hamamaidi (Head of the Department on UN Affairs), and Ambassador Fareed Yassen (an MFA senior advisor on policy) -- met with Pol M/C and other Emboffs to discuss Iraq's decision to formally request that the UN Secretary General ask the UNSC to form an investigative commission to examine the role of outside actors on Iraq's internal security. Yassen acknowledged that the August 19 bombings had provoked an angry, emotional response, and that the decision to request UN assistance had moved quickly through the GOI decision-making process. Yassen and the others expressed the hope that Iraq would receive support from its friends and noted that both the Iraqi PermRep to the UN and its ambassadors in key capitals had received instructions on September 3 to begin soliciting the support of UNSC member-states to create an independent investigative commission. They questioned Pol M/C at several points about the USG position on the request and the level of overall P-5 support Iraq could expect. Najib said the GOI had not yet heard back from the office of the UNSYG. FM Zebari had had a few calls with his Syrian counterpart on the issue, they said.

13. (C) Pol M/C assured the Iraqis that the United States shares Iraq's concerns about malign foreign influence on Iraqi security and wants to work with the Iraqi side. He also inquired about current Turkish and Iranian efforts to mediate the dispute with Syria. Ambassador Najib responded that Turkey is not an official mediator, but that Turkish efforts were helpful. He noted that representatives of Iraq, Syria, and Turkey would meet soon in Turkey for a trilateral meeting on security, water, and other matters that had been scheduled previously. Najib made clear that current political tensions would dominate the meeting. The Iraqi

officials had little to say about the effort by the Iranian FM to similarly mediate the crisis, except to note that the Iranians shared the GOI's concerns about the dangers to Iraqi stability that Iraqi Baathists posed. POL M/C requested that the GOI share with us the intelligence that it had provided to Turkey to pass to the Syrians, which the Iraqis agreed to do.

Relations with Syria

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¶4. (C) The MFA officials noted that the GOI's official request to the UNSG for an investigative commission did not single out any country in particular, although they were candid that Syria was in fact their intended target. Yassen characterized Iraq's bilateral relations with Syria as unequal, noting that Syria has all the "sticks" and Iraq has only "carrots" (primarily focused on oil and other trade). All three officials conveyed their belief that the creation of an investigative commission to examine foreign influences in Iraq would help to rectify the imbalance by giving the GOI a stick that it could use to pressure Syria to expel key Iraqi Baathists and stop support for their destabilizing behavior. Najib and Hamamaidi said that the GOI understood that getting a fully-fledged independent investigative commission actually functioning on the ground in Iraq would be a time-consuming process. The key, said Najib, was for the UN to start the process quickly, which would keep up the pressure on Syria, regardless of how long the decision-making and implementation took. They also noted that the process would depend on intelligence-sharing and that this would more

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easily be done with an investigative commission than with individual members of the Security Council.

¶5. (C) Asked what specific actions the GOI hoped the Syrians would take as a result of the pressure their UN move was creating, Yassen responded that one concrete step that the Syrians could take would be to expel the 197 Iraqi Baathists in Syria who are wanted for crimes related to terrorism in Iraq. Fundamentally, he added, "We want a verifiable change in Syrian government behavior."

Moving Forward

¶6. (C) In discussing their expectations of a timeline, the MFA officials noted that they expected the UNSYG to deliver the PM's letter to the Security Council this weekend and that negotiations would then commence. The officials noted they would be satisfied if a decision was taken by the beginning of the opening session of UNGA, explaining that FM Zebari was planning to be in New York as of September 19. They offered one scenario in which a fact-finding team might be sent, followed by a UNSCR-backed official investigation and tribunal, if warranted. Yassen also noted Iraq would certainly raise the issue at the Arab League Ministerial meeting in Cairo on September 7 although they did not expect anything concrete to come from that meeting.

¶7. (C) Pol M/C asked whether the GOI was prepared to share its intelligence with the UN to make its case and whether the GOI was willing to have the commission investigate all outside influences in Iraq (i.e., Iran). Najib affirmed that the GOI was prepared to present even more evidence than had already been furnished to Turkey and that it had no objection to an expanded focus for the investigation that examined "other neighboring countries'" support for terrorism in Iraq, including Iran. Pol M/C responded that a comprehensive approach would be necessary to give the investigation credibility and reiterated that the United States would try to be supportive of Iraqi efforts, but that it should share

its information with the U.S. side in the interim. Yassen asked whether the U.S. would be able to provide intelligence to support the Iraqi charges, as the case moved forward. Pol M/C agreed to relay the request.

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